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Dear Friend,

Pope Benedict XVI has presented to the world his first encyclical called "God is Love." Since he both distorts the very the nature of God and the meaning of a person's relationship with Him, it is most important that we address it.

The encyclical makes it easier to define biblically who Benedict XVI really is. In the present day environment of false ecumenism, with the Pope and his Roman Church, it is incumbent upon us to "*contend for the faith.*" What is at stake is to uphold the Biblical nature of God and righteousness of Christ Jesus the Lord in the Gospel.

This we have done in the article below. Kindly forward this article to others, and place it on your Webpage if possible.

We rejoice with you in "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,"

Richard Bennett

# POPE BENEDICT XVI'S GOD AND GOSPEL

On December 25, 2005, Benedict XVI (Karl Ratzinger) presented the first encyclical of his pontificate. The encyclical, entitled “God is Love,” addresses both the nature of God and the meaning of a person’s relationship with Him. It has been distributed widely throughout the world and is posted on the Vatican website.<sup>1</sup> It reveals that Ratzinger’s policies are firmly anchored in traditional Roman Catholic doctrine, as is to be expected from a man who for so long held the headship of the Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith.<sup>2</sup> Yet the encyclical is clothed in soft terminology and couched in an approach that wastes none of the fruits of false ecumenism that the prior pope had accumulated to the Papacy. The encyclical is divided into two major parts, the doctrinal and the practical. We will deal only with the doctrinal part in this short essay.

In his first section, Ratzinger states, “We have come to believe in God’s love: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person...”<sup>3</sup> By beginning with the concept, “God is love,” Ratzinger attempts to circumvent the essential issue of an individual being convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit in order to realize his need for the Savior. Conviction of sin is nowhere spoken of in this encyclical. No one becomes a Christian by simply believing in God’s love. Rather, a person is saved by God’s grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone, and to God alone be the glory.<sup>4</sup> There is no “coming to know and to believe in the love God has for us” without these

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_benxvi\\_enc\\_20051225\\_deus-caritas-est\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_benxvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html) It was first published on December 25, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Formerly known as the Office of the Inquisition and then the Holy Office. It is still housed in the same building in Rome as it had been during six horrendous centuries of torture and death when it carried out the papal decrees. It is still the duty of that office to carry out papal decrees.

<sup>3</sup> The word “encounter,” used nineteen times in this encyclical, is a classic buzzword of mysticism and Emergent Church movement to focus on experience rather than objective Biblical salvation.

<sup>4</sup> Grace alone and Faith alone, Ephesians 2:8-9; in Christ alone, Romans 3:23-26; to God alone be the glory, Ephesians 1:6.

prerequisites which, in the encyclical, Ratzinger has nowhere given. Rather, Ratzinger's statement gives the reader a security in God's love without addressing his sin nature and his sins. According to Scripture, however, we cannot know God's love until after we have fled from His wrath against our sin, repented of it, and turned to put our faith in Christ Jesus alone. God is a Being of matchless and incomparable perfect Holiness as the Scripture proclaims, "*Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*"<sup>5</sup> Without an appreciation of this absolute perfect Holiness of God, there is no saving knowledge of God's love. In the Gospel, the Holiness of God is dealt with as it is declared, "*for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...that he [God] might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*"<sup>6</sup> Ratzinger's deception is soul damming.

## Divide and conquer

In Section 2, Ratzinger employs the age-old tactic of divide and conquer by making a distinction. Stating that there is a problem with language, he asks rhetorically, "So we need to ask: are all these forms of love basically one, so that love, in its many and varied manifestations, is ultimately a single reality, or are we merely using the same word to designate totally different realities?" Ratzinger goes on to argue that God's love is both eros and agape after introducing a mishmash of citations and allusions to pagan philosophers: by which rationale he is able to state "affirmatively" that God's love is both eros and agape.<sup>7</sup> Scripture, however, denies such sophistry as it consistently uses the agape word group to define and describe the character of God's love toward His people.

In Section 9, "The newness of biblical faith," Ratzinger's conclusion is that "God loves man" and that "His [God's] love, moreover, is an elective love: among all the nations he chooses Israel and loves her—but he does so precisely with a view to healing the whole human race." There are a number of things wrong with his reasoning. First, it is based on the Catholic notion that man is **wounded** by sin,<sup>8</sup> a flat contradiction of

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<sup>5</sup> Exodus 15:11

<sup>6</sup> Romans 3:23-24, 26

<sup>7</sup> Section 7

<sup>8</sup> "...man has been wounded by sin...When he is drawn to think about his real self he turns to those deep recesses of his being where God who probes the heart awaits him, and where he decides his own destiny in the sight of God..." No. 64, "Gaudium et Spes," 7 December

Ephesians 2:1, that if a person is not “*in Christ*,” he is still “**dead in trespasses and sins**.” Second, the notion that God is going to heal the whole human race is nowhere in the Bible. Rather, He is calling out a people for His own, those who were chosen “*in him before the foundation of the world*”<sup>9</sup> to be His sons and daughters, the ones He begat “*with the word of truth*,”<sup>10</sup> the ones “*which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*.”<sup>11</sup> To his false gospel, Ratzinger has now added major dishonesty.

## **A god who is against himself**

In Section 10 of the encyclical, Ratzinger states, “God’s passionate love for his people—for humanity—is at the same time a forgiving love. It is so great that it turns God against himself, his love against his justice.” God’s people and humanity are not the same thing, as noted above. Nor is Ratzinger’s type of god, who has passionate love (eros plus agape) for humanity, the God of the Bible. “God against himself, his love against his justice” is not the essence of God’s character.<sup>12</sup> Rather, in the Bible God’s saving love is always in accord with His righteousness. We must accept God’s love as He has defined it. In Scripture God’s love is seen in the maintenance of His Law and in the manifestation of His justice, as Romans 3:26 clearly states: “*to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*.” God retained the integrity of His Character as a moral governor in that He showed a due regard to His Law and to the penalty of the Law in His plan of salvation.

In Section 12 Ratzinger continues, “His [Christ’s] death on the Cross is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form. By contemplating the pierced side of Christ (cf. 19:37), we can understand the starting-point of this Encyclical Letter: ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8).”

What Ratzinger fails to state is the first and essential message in the letter of the Apostle John, “*This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness*

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1965, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 1981 ed., Austin Flannery, O. P., Editor (Northport, NY: Costello Pub. Co.) §14 “The Essential Nature of Man.”

<sup>9</sup> Ephesians 1:4

<sup>10</sup> James 1:18

<sup>11</sup> John 1:13

<sup>12</sup> Mark 3:25 “*And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.*”

*at all.*"<sup>13</sup> The excellence of the Divine Nature in all its perfection is represented by light. All the absolute fullness of Holiness, Justice, and Truth exist in God. In Him there is no darkness at all. Ratzinger's concept of "turning of God against himself" is utter darkness! God never turns against Himself.<sup>14</sup> His purpose is not "to raise man up" but rather to present a perfect demonstration of His righteousness.

Totally missing from the whole encyclical is the concept of sin. Mankind is never shown to be "*dead in trespasses and sins.*"<sup>15</sup> Thus the concept of God's fulfilling His own just requirements in saving spiritually dead persons is also missing. In fact, God's purpose was that believers should be made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. As the Lord, who knew no sin of His own, was made sin for us, so we, who have no righteousness of our own, are made the righteousness of God in Him, summarized by the Apostle Paul, "*for He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*"<sup>16</sup>

## **Attempting to bypass the Lord Christ Jesus**

Ratzinger's god with his passionate love for humanity is an insult to the true love of God because it attempts to redefine the very nature of God. The true love of God perfectly upholds His truth, His commands, His Word, and His righteousness. God's saving love is not for humanity in general but is always particularized to those who are accredited with the righteousness of Christ. The Gospel is the demonstration in concrete historical fact of the perfect satisfaction which Christ rendered to all the demands of the Law, and which God places to the credit of every true believer. Before God's All-Holy nature, sin had to be punished and true righteousness established. This has been accomplished in the faithful obedience of the Lord Christ Jesus and His propitiatory sacrifice. Thus Christ's faithfulness is proclaimed by the Apostle Paul, "*even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe...being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*"<sup>17</sup> What is announced in these few words is the demonstration of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, even unto death. Such perfect rectitude is of God. The great news is that this absolute righteousness is "*unto all and upon all them that believe.*"

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<sup>13</sup> I John 1:5

<sup>14</sup> James 1:17

<sup>15</sup> Ephesians 2:1

<sup>16</sup> II Corinthians 5:21

<sup>17</sup> Romans 3:22, 24

## Ratzinger proposes Sacramental Mysticism

Having defined God's love as God turning against Himself in Christ's death on the Cross, Ratzinger begins Section 13 by stating, "Jesus gave this act of oblation an enduring presence through his institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. He anticipated his death and resurrection by giving his disciples, in the bread and wine, his very self, his body and blood as the new manna (cf. John 6:31-33<sup>18</sup>)." Then Ratzinger goes on to state, "The Eucharist draws us into Jesus' act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate *Logos*, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving." The section finishes with the words, "The sacramental 'mysticism,' grounded in God's condescension towards us, operates at a radically different level and lifts us to far greater heights than anything that any human mystical elevation could ever accomplish."

"Sacramental mysticism" is a totally abhorrent concept to the All-Holy God and the truth of His written Word. In John's Gospel, chapter six, which the Pope cites, the Lord explained that He was going to give His flesh for the life of the world. "*The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*"<sup>19</sup> Christ Jesus presented Himself not only as the One who had come here to die, but to give His flesh was to offer Himself as a sacrifice, to voluntarily lay down His life. In these words, we have the heart of the Gospel. His flesh He gave willingly in His sacrifice "for the life of the world." "*Then Jesus said unto them, verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.*"<sup>20</sup> This speaks of the essential requirement of faith in Christ Jesus the Lord. It is so serious that if one does not trust in the Lord's sacrifice on the cross, he will not have eternal life. Eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man signifies trusting on the Lord in His sacrifice. Christ Jesus accomplished all the benefits of redemption: pardon from sin, acceptance with God, the adoption as children of God, access to the throne of grace, and eternal life. Receiving this by faith is aptly called eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Eating His flesh and drinking His blood is to be totally identified with Him **by faith**—for His sacrificial death must be

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<sup>18</sup> John 6:31-33 "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

<sup>19</sup> John 6:51

<sup>20</sup> John 6:53

appropriated by faith if men are to be saved. “Eating” is equivalent to “believing” and confirms the central theme of what He proclaimed, which He summarized as “*He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*”<sup>21</sup> The bread that the Lord gives is not apart from Himself, one must come to Him and believe on Him to have everlasting life.

## **Human love proposed as the way to illuminate the world**

Ratzinger gives an invitation as he reaches a conclusion in Section 39. He states,

“Faith tells us that God has given his Son for our sakes and gives us the victorious certainty that it is really true: God is love!...Faith, which sees the love of God revealed in the pierced heart of Jesus on the Cross, gives rise to love. Love is the light—and in the end, the only light—that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working. Love is possible, and we are able to practise it because we are created in the image of God. To experience love and in this way to cause the light of God to enter into the world—this is the invitation I would like to extend with the present Encyclical.”

Ratzinger emphatically states, “Love is the light—and in the end, the only light—that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working.” This statement is consummate heresy. Biblically, the holiness of God is “the Light.” His holiness is His essential characteristic. Thus the Scripture proclaims, “*Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee...*”<sup>22</sup> Ratzinger denigrates the holiness of God, ignores the Holy Spirit while imposing fallen human sentiments as the conditioning element in the divine work of salvation.

Further, for Ratzinger to state that “to experience love and in this way to cause the light of God to enter into the world” is outrageous before the Lord God. A person’s only hope rests on Christ’s perfect sacrifice before God’s All-Holy nature. To those who might be taken in by Ratzinger’s notions we respond with Christ Jesus’ proclamation: “*I am the light of the world.*” The Lord directly announced that He banishes spiritual darkness. He came as the light-revealing God exposing mankind, to the end that all who believe on Him should be delivered from the darkness

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<sup>21</sup> John 6:47

<sup>22</sup> Revelation 15:4.

and the ruin of sin. The Lord's commandment is explicit, "*this is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.*"<sup>23</sup>

## **Encyclical helps define Benedict XVI biblically**

By the early sixteenth century, many Bible believers clearly understood that the office of the Papacy is the Antichrist.<sup>24</sup> Ratzinger's documented statements in his first encyclical show him to be the latest one in the long line fulfilling that office. The prophetic portrayal of the wickedness of a man who would both corrupt the Biblical concept of who God is and deform the very Gospel of grace is a demonstration of the divine inspiration of the Bible and the authority of the All Holy God.<sup>25</sup>

Scripture speaks of the "mystery of iniquity" shown visibly in the form of the Man of Sin. The outcome of apostasy is the "deceivableness of unrighteousness." Such apostasy is marked by hypocrisy and deceit while appearing righteous and holy. This is what we have seen in this study of the Papal encyclical. What we have before our eyes is the "*deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.*"<sup>26</sup> The same Benedict XVI assumes unto himself the titles of "Holy Father" and "Vicar of Christ" fulfils in the unqualified sense of the definition of the Antichrist given by the Apostle John, "*who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son.*"<sup>27</sup> The Pontiff in taking these designations to himself denies both the Father and the Son.

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<sup>23</sup> John 6:29 The seriousness of His command is clear: "*he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*" John 3:36

<sup>24</sup> As early as the tenth century, the idea that the Pope is the Antichrist was extant, including among Roman Catholic prelates, and publicly stated. A major reason for the heinous persecution of the ancient churches of Piedmont, particularly the Vaudois, is that from their study of Revelation and events of the twelfth century in which they lived, they specifically held the Pope as the Antichrist. See Peter Allix, *Some Remarks upon The Ancient Churches of Piedmont* (1690, 1692), Ch. XXI in *The Ecclesiastical History of the Ancient Churches of Piedmont and of the Albigenses* Reprint (Gallatin, TN 37066: Church History Research & Archives, 1989) pp. 217-230. That twelfth century Vaudois understanding developed in the thirteenth century into the idea that the papal system is the Antichrist. LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Review & Herald, 1950) Vol. I, pp. 878-882.

<sup>25</sup> For full documentation of this prophetic fact read online our article, "The Antichrist Unveiled" or listen to the MP3 of the same on Sermon Audio at: <http://snipurl.com/e61b>. Also available in printed form from Richard Bennett's Catalogue.

<sup>26</sup> II Thessalonians 2:10

<sup>27</sup> 1 John 2:22.

## **“Contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”**

Holy Scripture clearly directs all believers, pastors, and teachers included, to unequivocally “*have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.*”<sup>28</sup> However, many leaders have and are openly joining in company with the Pope and his Roman Church, “*they meet with darkness in the daytime...*”<sup>29</sup> Continuing in ‘loving dialogue and discourse’ with the Roman Catholic Church is becoming their undoing. It is incumbent upon all those enlightened by the Holy Spirit to deliver the Word faithfully to leaders who have been seduced into this evil fellowship, “*whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.*”<sup>30</sup> Each of us is to take heed to himself, “*and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*”<sup>31</sup> This biblical command is particularly applicable in apostate times such as our own. ♦

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<sup>28</sup> Ephesians 5:11

<sup>29</sup> Job 5:14

<sup>30</sup> Ezekiel 3:11

<sup>31</sup> I Timothy 4:16